



# Industrialization and Urbanization in Turkey at the beginning of the 20th Century

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## ABSTRACT



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*The starting point of this study is the fact that every production system entails a specific spatial organization and changes its physical environment. This research is an attempt to understand the industrialization period of Turkey's Early Republican Period (1930's) and the spatial effects of the new production system. Right after the Turkish War of Independence, The Republican Government of Turkey had aimed to establish an independent country and started to carry out a modernization and contemporization project. This project had different dimensions appealing to the institutional, economical, social and civic aspects of Turkey. The economical dimension included the industrialization and economical independence of Turkey. Besides from its economical, political and social goals, the Republican Government had aimed to change the physical appearance of the country. The Government's first goal was to turn the country into the space of National Turkish Republic State from an empire's land. Secondly, the small towns or settlements of the country were supposed to become modern cities, the places of modernity, just like the modern cities of the industrial and developed countries of the world. That explains why the factories which were set up all around the country had played such a crucial role in the modernization period of Turkey at the beginning of the Republican era. They were not only economical achievements of the state; they also affected their physical and social environments and introduced the modern way of living particularly where they were set up.*

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## 1. The Industrial Revolution

The dynamics of the industrialization process of Turkey differed from those of the Industrial Revolution of European Countries. The economical, political and social structure of Ottoman Empire did not allow such kind of industrialization. In the 18th century, Great Britain was subject to the rapid economic development and urban population growth. The invention of machinery sealed the fate of the cottage industry and concentrated industry in factories. These factories, which were sited near water and

coal deposits, encouraged migration from the agricultural settlements so that new urban developments mushroomed ([Curl, 1970](#))

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After the Enclosure Acts and the deprivation of the yeomen of their ancient rights, the class differences were accentuated, wealth being concentrated in fewer hands, and the free men and their families became the proletariat, forming the labour factor of production. Rural depopulation was caused by several factors, but one which is often overlooked, was the fact that the urban slums were probably a lot better than the rural ones ([Curl,1970](#)).

## 2. The Social and Economic Structure of the Ottoman Empire

During the 18th century, the Ottoman Empire had appeared to carry the characteristics of a pre-industrial economy; poverty, stagnation, dependence on agriculture, lack of occupational specialization and the low degree of geographical integration ([Curl,1970](#)).The reasons for this situation were the economic and social structure of the Ottoman Empire. Firstly, the majority of the population was formed of villagers, called as "reaya". They worked on the lands of the empire and paid taxes, and they did not actually constitute a class system. Secondly, the priority of the land was belonging to Sultan, and the local authorities (timar owners) of these lands were only responsible to collect the taxes from the reaya. They did not have the right to own land because the Ottoman's land policies did not allow any Enclosure Acts within the Empire. The whole system of the government was established on the gathering of surplus by the government from the reaya, so that any event that could possibly cause accumulation of capital was prevented by the government ([Kongar,1998](#)).

The economic development of the European countries also affected the Ottoman's economical system. Firstly, the new trade ways eliminated the Mediterranean trade ways, thus the Ottoman Empire lost an important source of taxes it gathered from the control of these trade ways. Secondly, the metals like gold and silver which introduced into European economy from the New World had caused inflation and increased the prices. Ottoman Empire turned into a cheap source of food and raw material. The Ottoman Empire had a stagnant economic and social system which obstructed the flow of money throughout the country. The low population rate, the production which depended on agriculture or crafts and its locally connectedness, and the insufficiency of transportation and communication systems did not allow the labour to transfer from agricultural production to the activities concerned with industrial production. As a result, the rural population had no chance to move into urban

communities. On the other hand, there was no demand for manufactures or services from the society, because of the poverty and low population, thus there had never been a demand for a big capacity of industrial production. The only places which were integrated with the world's market system were the harbour cities or the settlements which were set up on the trade ways of the caravans. But the hinterland of the Ottoman Empire could not integrate with this system. The delay of technological developments and education in the country made it obligatory to transfer specialists from European countries, and there was a lack of occupational specialization. Besides from these reasons, the social status of the workers were always humiliated within the paternalist structure of the guild system, and being a soldier or an official for the government had always been preferred to being an industrial worker by the society members ([Toprak,1985](#)).

**Table 1.** The number of factories and workers according to the statistics of 1913-1915 ([Ökcün,1998](#))

	Number of Factories		Number of Workers	
	1913	1915	1913	1915
The Production of the factory				
1. Food	76	78	4281	3916
2. Earth	20	21	980	336
3. Leather	12	13	930	1270
4. Wood	19	24	705	377
5. Weaving	75	78	7765	6763
6. Paper	55	55	1897	1267
7. Chemistry	12	13	417	131

## 3. The Industrialization Process of Turkish Republic

At the beginning of the Republican Era of Turkey (1920's), most of the consumer goods were imported from other countries. The world's Financial Crisis at the beginning of the 1930's affected Turkey's economy as well. The effects of the crisis on Turkey's economy were the deterioration of international terms of trade, the decrease of exportation and the decrease of government's budgetary incomes. The most important source of income of Turkish economy, the agricultural exportation, was becoming less profitable during this period, and the idea of industrialization was becoming more charming each day ([Tezel,1994](#)).

The new Republican Government had aimed to develop the country and provide its economic independence by introducing contemporary industrial production. Thus, the private sector had been granted many privileges in order to realize

the industrialization process of Turkey, but due to lack of enough experiment and capital, and the untrustworthy situation of the economic crisis of the day, the private sector could not handle this project ( [Kepenek,1996](#)).

At the beginning of the 1930's, the government decided to undertake the economical course of Turkey, by introducing many legislations and new applications. This was also one of the results of the state ruling policy of the government. One of the most important applications of this period was "The First Five Year Industrialization Plan" of Turkey, which had been prepared during 1932 and put into practice in 1934([İnan,1933](#)).

To find technical and financial support for the government's new economic policies, the Prime Minister İsmet Pascha (İnönü) visited many countries like Soviet Union and Italy, in 1932. At the same year, a group of Soviet technicians came to Turkey to make surveys about the investigation programme of Turkish government and at the end of the year, the group presented a report to the government.

But the government was not contented with this report and in 1933, a group of American specialists, in which the famous American economist Edwin Kemmerer had participated, was invited to Turkey. These specialists prepared a detailed report on Turkey's economic conditions, natural sources, capital resources, industry, transportation system, national and international trade system, money and banking system, foundations, working conditions, health and education system, and public administration. They presented their report to Ministry of Economy in 1934. These researches forecasted that it could be possible to set up factories in Turkey more profitable than other countries of the world ([Tezel,1994](#)).

These reports of Soviet and American Specialists determined the contents and form of the investment programme of Turkish government. Most of the projects were supposed to be realized with the financial support of Soviet Union. However, the priorities of the governmental capitalism were different from those of the realities of capitalist thinking during the realization of this plan. Instead of assembling at certain points of the country, the factories were dispersed throughout the country ([Kessler,1948](#)). According to the plan, many factories producing consumer's goods were set up among Turkey's many different regions.

**Table 2.** The factories and their regions, ([Tavanc, 1973](#))

Region	The production of the factory
1. Marmara Region İstanbul İzmit Gemlik d. Bursa	cotton, glass paper, cellulose, phosphate, sulphur artificial silk merino wool
2. Aegean Region Kütahya Nazilli c. Bodrum	ceramics cotton sponge
3. Mediterranean Region Keçiborlu Isparta	sulphur oil of rose
4. Black Sea Region Kastamonu Karabük	hemp iron-steel
5. Middle Anatolia Region Ereğli Kayseri	cotton cotton
6. Eastern Anatolia Region Malatya İğdır	cotton cotton

This Industrialization plan was not only an economical plan but also put into practice the spatial strategies of the modernization project of the Republican Government ([Tekeli,1999](#)). The places for the factories were chosen among the small cities or towns of Turkey which laid on the railway system, so that even the smallest settlement could take the advantage of the factory and its services. The factories yielded employment, increase of population, industrialization and as a result urbanization of the small towns-settlements where they had been set up.

These factories resembled the company towns of Europe and America which firstly occurred in the 19th century. A company town was a community inhabited by the employees of a single company or groups of companies which also owns a substantial part of the real estate and houses ([Crawford,1995](#)). These company towns were the challenges of the paternalist investors against the intolerable conditions of living and the new values system of the new industrial era.

Pullman in the United States of America is a good example for the company towns. It was a healthy and rational environment with its well organized plan. It was not only an industrial complex, but also it was offering a new way of life with its

accident insurance, a company doctor, a school system, athletic clubs, a company band, social and educational clubs for workers.

Saltaire in Yorkshire (1860) was another important company town, with its district social rules and clear landscape planning. The factory building and the church are just opposite of each other. On the main axial road of the settlement lies the factory schools, club and institute buildings. Behind these buildings, there are the workers houses ([Kostof,1991](#)).

In Turkey, the factories, the new production system, put their effects on the economic and social structure of the community, and also on physical environment. Firstly, the people who used to earn their livings by agriculture or crafts, began to learn how to work in a factory system, from turning the machines on, to coming to work on time, or from living in mass houses of factory to negotiating for their salaries. They began to be the members of a working class, not only a family or a tribe. The workers coming from the rural areas of Anatolia to the settlements where the factories were set up caused an increase of population and that was the first and a very important step for urbanization. The increase of population necessitated new houses, new services and new recreational facilities all through the settlement. The industrial production also revitalized the economic structure with its demand for raw material and small industrial production. Secondly, the factory complexes, with their grid layout plans, housing units for workers, social services, infrastructures and recreational areas, introduced a new kind of building type into the small and rural settlements of Anatolia. These services of the factory also affected the urbanization process of the settlements.

These complexes were not only the spaces of production, but also they served as the cultural centres and gathering places for the community. As women started to work at the factories, they became the active members of the social life. The social activities organized by the factories (among these the celebration parties of the national ceremonies, sports activities, theatre performances, reading and writing courses for non-readers can be listed) played an effective role in the education of people. The people living in the town were able to use the green areas of the factory for recreational activities. By that means, the factory complex served also as a public space where people could meet with each other, educate, recreate, and took the advantage of many services. Those were the first steps of a community towards a modern way of life through the factories, which introduced them the industrial production system.

Here two of these factories are compared with each other according to their spatial properties. One of them is the "Sümerbank Nazilli Basma (printed cotton cloth) Factory", which was set up between the years 1935-937. This factory was a very important step of the First Five Year Industrialization Plan, as it was one of the first factories that was realized and began production. The plans of the factory were drawn by a Soviet firm "Turkstroj", and during the building of the factory, engineers from the Soviet Union worked in Turkey, both to build the factory and to educate Turkish engineers and workers. Another factory is "Sümerbank Kayseri Weaving Factory" which was opened in 1935. Kayseri factory was also set up by the technical and financial support of the Soviet Union ([inan,1972](#)). The plans of the two factory buildings are very similar to each other.

When we take a look at the layout plans of the factories, we observe a rational grid system, and very huge buildings which oppose with the organic and traditional layout of the small towns. This is because an industrial landscape is a direct



**Figure 1.** The Sümerbank Nazilli Basma Factory 1934, the original plan drawing, Factory Library.

translation of the technical and social necessities of a particular method of industrial production into a settlement form([Crawford,1995](#)).The factories are connected to the main railway system with a narrow gauge railway where possible. This maintained the transportation of raw materials and the products of the factory, and also served to carry the workers to factories in some places.

Both of the factories are symmetrical in planning and a hierarchy is visible among the building groups. The production units of the factories are located at the centre of this hierarchy, after them are the administration offices, and the residential units of the administrative staff in the boundaries of the factory settlements. The workers houses had been added by time in case of need, and they are located just opposite of the factory. The infrastructure of the factories like power station or water plumbing system served the whole town. Other services and facilities of the factories included health care centre, primary school, nursery centre, cinema, sports complex, library,



fire station, and a restaurant which could be used as an assembly hall.

These two factory buildings were built with steel frame and concrete, which were the most contemporary building technologies of their era. The buildings are, simple and functionalist buildings, which reflect the modernist tendencies of the 20th century's industrial production systems. When we take a look at the production units of the factories, we can even observe the effects of the Russian Constructivism on these



**Figure 2.** the general view of Kayseri Factory, on the left the weaving ateliers (1930's).

buildings (the combination of rational elements in harmony to form a unity) ([Iakov, 1981](#)).

#### 4. Conclusion

The Industrialization of Turkey in the Early Republican Period was an attempt to build up an economically independent and modern country. After war of independence, the government had to undertake the economical course of Turkey, and the First Five Year Industrialization Plan was a successful application of the government during this period, because all the projects that had been intended in this plan were realized, either with national or out coming budgets.

This industrialization process differed from the "Industrial Revolution" of European countries during the 18th and 19th centuries and had its own social and economical dynamics. Firstly, the economical activities of the Ottoman Empire were depended on agriculture and crafts and the only factories limited in number were producing for the army. Thus, the industrialization of the whole country was a new situation for the Republican government and the public. Secondly, the population was very low with the effects of wars, and stabilized to rural settlements, and the beliefs and traditions of the community were not appropriate to form the immobile society which the industrial production system needed. The insufficiency of the transportation system was another reason for this. Thirdly, the factories were not private investments, they were the investments of government, so the industrialization process of Turkey could not be named as a public wide "revolution", it was only a governmental policy applied during a limited time and with limited resources.

In addition, there had been a sudden change in the governing of the country and parallel with the policies of the modern government, the

factories changed the socio-economical structure of the society and affected the physical environment of the settlements where they had been set up. The increase of population and the development of the economic activities depending on the demands of the factory and production for and integrating with the world's market system caused the urbanization of these settlements. The cities took their shape according to these factories and new industrial sites and new neighbourhoods surrounded the factories. The social activities organized by the local authorities and the administrations of the factories gathered the public together and these were new kinds of activities for a previously agricultural community (including sports activities, theatre performances, cinemas, the celebrations of the public days, libraries, reading and writing courses).

But the success of this period could not be sustained long. Especially after 1950's, the factories began to lose their effectiveness, and most of them are closed now. Luckily enough, the above mentioned factories are now properties of two different state universities. The buildings and the land of "Nazilli Basma Factory" was purchased by Aydin Adnan Menderes University and there are some projects prepared by the municipality of Nazilli to turn these places into a techno-park. The Weaving Factory of Kayseri became the property of Erciyes University in Kayseri, and the university is planning to change some of the buildings of factory into a campus for the university.

With above mentioned effects of the factories, it can be said that the government's spatial goals concerned with the towns and cities of Modern Turkey were realized particularly, where the factories were set up. The modernization process of these towns depended on industrialization and urbanization. Therefore, these factories exemplify spatial forms of new means of production, which on the last analysis changed the social aspects. In other words, these were the factories that produced "cities".

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#### Conflict of interests

The Authors declare no conflict of interest.

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